

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03685 260904Z

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9764

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3685

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN APPREHENSION

REF: (A) STATE 097891 (B) BEIRUT 3464 (C) BEIRUT 3657

(D) DAMASCUS 2471

1. POINT RAISED IN BEIRUT 3464 WAS THAT CHRISTIANS WERE BEGINNING TO HAVE APPREHENSIONS VIS-A-VIS THE SYRIANS; NOT WHETHER THEY WERE JUSTIFIED IN HAVING THEM.

2. AFTER ASAD'S PREVIOUS ASSURANCES, CAPPED BY HIS VERY FORTH-COMING TALK OF APRIL 12, A SORT OF EUPHORIA WAS NOTED DURING AMBASSADOR BROWN'S APRIL 13 VISIT TO JOUNIE WITH RESPECT TO CONFIDENCE IN ASAD. THEREFORE THE NEWS OF ARAFAT'S TRIP, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES IT WAS MADE, WAS SOMETHING OF A COLD SHOWER. MORE-OVER, TELEPHONE CONNECTIONS WERE BROKEN OFF FOR THREE DAYS FOLLOWING THE TRIP, WHICH TENDED TO RAISE SUSPICIONS IN THIS GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO ARE FRIGHTENED AND WHO ARE THUS PRONE TO BE SUSPICIOUS. AS IT TURNED OUT, THE SYRIANS WERE IN NO WAY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LACK OF TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS.

3. FRANGIE'S REACTION TO THE ARAFAT TRIP WAS NOT UNTYPICAL. WE HAVE IT FROM TWO SOURCES THAT HE WAS TO SIGN THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT THE DAY WORD CAME OUT THAT ARAFAT WAS GOING TO DAMASCUS. LEARNING THIS, FRANGIE CATEGORICALLY REFUSED TO PROCEED UNTIL BEING ADVISED HOW THE ARRANGMENTS MADE WITH ARAFAT AFFECTED PREVIOUS COMMITMENTS.

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RM THE RESULT OF FRANGIE'S STAND WAS DAHDAH'S VISIT WHICH, WHILE ALLEGEDLY NOT ELIMINATING APPREHENSIONS COMPLETELY, DID REMOVE THEM TO A GREAT EXTENT AS FAR AS THE SYRIANS WERE CONCERNED. IN OTHER WORDS, ASAD WAS ABLE TO CONVINCE DAHDAH THAT, IF THE SYRIANS WERE NOT ABLE TO PLAY THE MORE DIRECT ROLE IN LEBANON WHICH THEY WANTED TO PLAY AND WHICH THE CHRISTIANS WANTED THEM TO PLAY, THIS WAS BECAUSE THE SYRIANS WERE NOT GETTING THE NECESSARY BACKING FROM THE AMERICANS. THUS MORE INDIRECT MEANS HAD TO BE DEvised EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE ADMITTEDLY LESS SATISFACTORY.

WARING

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